

INITIAL VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL GUIDELINES

The purpose of the Initial Vocational Assessment protocol is to establish standard practices for a vocational assessment through the application of consistent procedures including the hierarchy of vocational rehabilitation as defined in Appendix A. The goal of a vocational assessment is to objectively measure an injured worker's employability to identify realistic return to work opportunities and to develop appropriate vocational recommendations based on the individual's functional status, education, and vocational background and transferable skills. Progression in the hierarchy of vocational rehabilitation is a sequential process based on the injured worker's functional status, transferable skills, and established average weekly wage. It is presumed that each level of the hierarchy will be addressed when establishing vocational recommendations.

1. An Initial Vocational Assessment must be provided by a Qualified Rehabilitation Counselor (QRC) or Qualified Rehabilitation Counselor Intern (QRCI) as certified by the RI Department of Labor and Training per Section 28-33-41(h) of the Rhode Island Workers' Compensation Act.

2. The initial interview may be conducted at a mutually agreeable meeting place.

3. The referral source will provide claimant-identifying data, medical records, including functional capacities, if available, as they pertain to the work-related injury, purpose of referral and special instructions, if any.

4. During the initial interview, the rehabilitation counselor should gather all relevant information to include, but not be limited to; current medical status, educational history, specialized training, military experience, vocational history, including job duties and wages, interests, and hobbies. The hierarchy of vocational rehabilitation will be explained to the injured worker at the time of the initial interview. One meeting

with the claimant will be allowed to complete the Initial Vocational Assessment.

5. A Transferable Skills Analysis should be completed provided that defined functional capacities are identified in the medical records and a return to work with the employer, to the original job (with or without modifications) has been ruled out. The Transferable Skills Analysis will be based on the following U.S. Department of Labor publications: D.O.T. (Dictionary of Occupational Titles), C.O.J. (Classification of Jobs), GOE (Guide for Occupational Exploration), SOC (Selected Characteristics of Occupations defined in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles) and the O*NET. Software programs based on these publications/references will be considered acceptable resources for completing the analysis.

6. Testing is not considered part of the Initial Vocational Assessment, but may be included as a recommendation.

7. The initial Vocational Assessment Report will address the following:

- a. Purpose of the referral.
- b. Brief summary of claimant's medical history and current status, description of functional limitations and abilities, and any pending medical treatment.
- c. Claimant's education, specialized training and military experience.
- d. Claimant's vocational history, including wages and length of employment. DOT (Dictionary of Occupational Titles) numbers should accompany job titles held.
- e. Results of the Transferable Skills Analysis, if completed.
- f. Identification of assets and barriers as they relate to continued vocational rehabilitation services.
- g. The hierarchy of vocational rehabilitation will be considered in establishing recommendations.

h. Recommendations.

8. The Initial Vocational Assessment report will be submitted within two (2) weeks of the initial interview.

APPENDIX A

HIERARCHY OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

1. **Return to work, same employer, same job** - vocational services may include a job analysis and coordination to return to work with the employer, but usually no vocational services provided.
2. **Return to work, same employer, different job** - work with the employer to identify a new position that would fit the restrictions or modifications needed by the injured worker.
3. **Return to work, different employer, same job** - vocational services would assist in job development and placement.
4. **Return to work, different employer, different job** - vocational services may consist of performing a transferable skills analysis, interest testing, job development and job placement.
5. **On-the-job training** - identify a new employer that can train the injured worker on the job. This program can last between 3 months and 6 months.
6. **Skills enhancement** - vocational services may identify a course to develop a skill prior to a job search. This does not consist of a full retraining program.
7. **Retraining** - vocational assessment identifies that the above options are not feasible and then identifies a retraining program usually less than two (2) years in length. The training program can range from a short-term certificate program to a two (2) year associates degree program. Vocational services would probably include interest testing, transferable skills analysis, aptitude testing, labor market research and vocational exploration to support a training program.

Protocol History:

Passed: 5/29/01
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